

# THE SURRENDER TO SECULARISM

by

MOST REV. CUTHBERT M. O'GARA, C.P., D.D.  
*Bishop of Yuanling*

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## About the Author

Bishop Cuthbert O'Gara was born in Capital City, Canada in 1886. He entered the Grand Seminary in Montreal and later the Passionist Novitiate in Pittsburgh. He was ordained to the priesthood at St. Michael's Passionist Monastery, Union City, New Jersey in 1915 and served there for eight years as Professor of Theology.

In 1924 he was assigned to missionary work in Northwest Hunan on mainland China. Arriving there, he found the territory suffering from the worst famine in modern Chinese history. Father O'Gara immediately devoted his efforts to what has become his lifelong apostolate, administering to the sick, the suffering and the dying.

In 1930 Pius XI appointed him as Prefect Apostolic of Shenchow. In 1934 he was appointed Bishop of Yuanling. During the Chinese-Japanese war, Bishop O'Gara became known throughout China as the "Stretcher-Bearer Bishop" as he was often seen carrying the wounded to his Catholic Mission Hospital. When no stretcher was available, Bishop O'Gara carried the injured on his own back.

He has been twice arrested and condemned to die. First, in 1941, by the Japanese and ten years later by the Communists. When the Reds took over China in 1949, Bishop O'Gara fearlessly defended the rights of the Church and his people. For two years he resisted Communist threats. Then in June, 1951, the Communists dragged him before the high altar of his Cathedral, and there he was stripped of his robes of office and his episcopal insignia. He was cast into solitary confinement and subjected to every kind of vicious lie and to inconceivable psychological torture.

After two years of vermin-infested beds, unhealthy prison quarters, meager rations of watered rice, and being under the watchful eyes of Communist guards every moment of the twenty-four hour day, Bishop O'Gara was expelled from the country. He was carried across the border into Hongkong on a stretcher. His stretcher bearers were two Passionist priests.

Of Bishop O'Gara's life, Father George Nolan says: "This modern apostle parallels (that) of an earlier Apostle, Paul of Tarsus. Through poverty, floods, famine, and disease, Bishop O'Gara labored for the homeless and destitute people . . . he was broken in health, but never in mind or spirit."



On May 13, 1968 Bishop Cuthbert M. O'Gara died of a heart attack while residing at the Passionist Monastery of St. Michael's, Union City, New Jersey.

## CONTENTS

DARWINISM — SECULARISM — COMMUNISM .....	11
THE SIGNS .....	13
U.S. BISHOPS WARN AGAINST SECULARISM .....	13
LEADING PROONENT: JOHN DEWEY .....	17
GOD IS BANNED .....	17
IS THE WEST STILL CHRISTIAN? .....	19
DIALECTIC MATERIALISM IN EDUCATION .....	20
IDEOLOGICAL BEDFELLOWS .....	21
POPE PAUL'S MANDATE .....	22
WHICH WAY AMERICANS? .....	24

## ***Darwinism—Secularism—Communism***

*My message to you is on secularism, which is a softener-up for communism.*

You will not be too surprised, perhaps, if I begin in Red China. Be assured, however, you will not be kept there long. When the Communist troops over-ran my diocese they were followed in very short order by the propaganda corps — the civilian branch of the Red forces — an organization, if anything, more disciplined, more zealous, more fanatical, than the People's Army of Liberation itself. The entire population, city and countryside, was immediately organized into distinctive categories — grade school and high school pupils and teachers (Catholic, Protestant and pagan), merchants, artisans, members of the professions, yes, and even the lowly coolies. Everyone, for a week or more, was forced to attend the seminar specified for his or her proper category and there willy-nilly in the servile submission listen to the official Communist line.

Now what, I ask, was the first lesson given to the indoctrinees? One might have supposed that this would have been some pearl of wisdom let drop by Marx, Lenin, or Stalin. Such however was not the case. The very first, the *fundamental*, lesson given was man's descent from the ape — Darwinism! This naturally shocked the Christians (Catholics and Protestants) attending the seminars and as might have been expected they reacted violently. The non-Christians, who in China were commonly referred to as pagans, and who constituted the vast majority of the population, were equally antagonistic to the ape theory because from time immemorial the Chinese people in a nebulous sort of way had believed in a Supreme Being, in a soul and in an existence after death.

Are you surprised that the Chinese Communists choose Darwinism as the corner-stone upon which to build their new political structure? At first this maneuver amazed me. I had taken for granted that they would begin by expounding the economic principles of Marx. Later on when in a Red jail the reason for this unanticipated tactic became very obvious to me. By that time I knew very well that the primary purpose of the Peoples' Government in Peking was to extirpate all religious belief and practice from China — particularly to destroy utterly the Catholic Church. After two years under house-arrest and suffering with my fellow-priests and religious Sisters every manner of annoyance and humiliation I knew only too well that the clause, Freedom of Religion, written into the 1948 Constitution had been inserted there only to hoodwink foreign governments and had no relevancy whatsoever within the territorial limits of Red China. The official policy, rigid and ruthless, was transparently clear. *Religion delenda est.* Religion must be destroyed.

Darwinism negates God, the human soul, the after-life. Into this vacuum Communism enters as the be-all and the end-all of the intellectual slavery it has created. In the Red prison in which I was held, the slogan "Bring your mind over to us and all your troubles will end," was hammered into the minds of the prisoners with brutal and numbing monotony. Nothing but a groveling holocaust of the human person can satiate the lust for dominance of Peking's Red regime.

## *The Signs*

When I returned to the United States from Communist China I was incline to take much for granted. I felt, for example, that the catastrophic sell-out which had happened there had been wholly brought about by the nefarious activities of traitors in our State Department and by the spies whom over a long period of time had been coddled in those privileged and sacrosanct precincts. But later on as I traveled about the country and began lecturing to various groups, I began to sense a queer phenomenon — an amalgam of coldness, indifference and even aggressive antagonism — towards those who bore first hand information about, and witnessed to, the well-publicized atrocities committed by the Red Chinese. I found it strange — I found it unbelievably painful — that a like hostile attitude should exist even in some Catholic Colleges and religious houses where one might have expected to experience a spontaneous outburst of righteous indignation when the unparalleled magnitude of the disaster that had befallen the Christian Church in China was authentically described. This unwholesome and almost universal academic mood, was perplexing and challenging. I began then a serious search for some satisfying explanation.

## *U.S. Bishops Warn Against Secularism*

About this time I came to know of the Annual Statement of the American Hierarchy for 1952 in which the Bishops warn of the dangers of Secularism. I was not familiar with this pastoral letter because it had appeared when I was still a prisoner. In reading this document it became clear to me that Secularism, which the Hierarchy so strongly deplored, was the very background against which the sell-out of China had been engineered. Following

the Bishops' lead I continued to read on this subject and soon I discovered that the principles of Secularism as propounded by the two Englishmen, Holyoke and Bradlaugh, early in the nineteenth century, had quickly found a fertile field on this side of the Atlantic. Almost concurrently with the public discussions on Secularism going on in England around 1848, the American Secular Union and the Free Thought Federation, with many affiliate societies, began actively to advocate in the United States, the separation of Church and State and had adopted as a practical platform the *Nine Demands of Liberalism*.

Among those nine demands are surprisingly to be found the following: that all religious teaching in public schools and the use of the Bible be prohibited; that the theological oath in all departments of government and the courts of the land be abolished; that the laws looking towards the enforcement of Christian morality be abrogated. It is significant that with regard to the question of the existence of God, Bradlaugh was an atheist, Holyoke was agnostic — both were thoroughly secular and anti-Roman.

Most interesting is it to note that the first use of the term "Secularism" about 1846 coincides roughly with the endeavors of Horace Mann — "the father of the American Public Schools" — as Secretary of the First State Board of Education of Massachusetts in 1837. Mann filled the post from 1837 to 1848. He was convinced that Christianity — he knew only Calvinism — had nothing to contribute to the ideal society that was to be achieved through education alone. He worked perseveringly for the establishment of public schools divorced from all religious influence.

The policy of complete separation of religion from education met naturally with the immediate opposition, as might have been

expected, of many Protestant and Catholic leaders in the United States. The Catholic position found expression in the First Plenary Council of Baltimore in 1852 which strongly advised the establishment of parochial schools. This policy was restated in the Second Plenary Council and finally was earnestly and effectively implemented by the Third Plenary Council in 1884.

That Horace Mann's extreme program for public schools made rapid and considerable progress may be gathered from Abraham Lincoln's Proclamation issued in March 1863, when he said:

*"We have been the recipients of the choicest bounties of Heaven; we have been preserved, these many years, in peace and prosperity . . . but we have forgotten God. We have forgotten the gracious hand which preserved us in peace, and multiplied and enriched us; we have vainly imagined, in the deceitfulness of our hearts, that all these blessings were produced by some superior wisdom and virtue of our own. Intoxicated with unbroken success we have become too self-sufficient to feel the necessity of redeeming and preserving grace, too proud to pray to the God who made us."*

It seems to me that these words might well be chiseled large and bold on the Abraham Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C., or perhaps, even better, on the inner wall of the Supreme Court chamber where the nine awesome Justices sit in solemn judgment.

The American Catholic Hierarchy in their Annual Statement issued November 15, 1952, aptly used Lincoln's words as a description of our present situation. The Statement says in part:

*"These words of Lincoln not only recall to us our national traditions relative to the importance of religion; they also*

*remind us of the constant inclination of this country to turn away from God and to be immersed in material pursuits. In our day widespread yielding to this temptation has given rise to an even greater danger — the way of life we call — Secularism.”*

*“Those who follow this way of life”, continue the Bishops, “distort and blot out our religious traditions, and seek to remove all influence of religion from public life. Their main efforts are centered on the divorce of religion from education. Their strategy seems to be: first to secularize completely the public school and then to claim for it a total monopoly of education.”*

*“To teach moral and spiritual values divorced from religion and based solely on social convention, as these men claim to do, is not enough. Unless man’s conscience is enlightened by the knowledge of principles that express God’s law, there can be no firm and lasting morality. Without religion,” say the Bishops, “morality becomes simply a matter of individual taste, of public opinion or majority vote. The moral law must derive its validity and its binding force from the truths of religion. Without religious education, moral education is impossible.”*

So speak the American Bishops!

## ***Leading Proponent: John Dewey***

Why, may we ask, this sharp contradiction between the American tradition of the need of religion in education as expressed by Lincoln and the Catholic Hierarchy, and our present day alarming condition of affairs? The chief factor contributing to this deplorable situation is undoubtedly the philosophy of John Dewey — the man who, for over fifty years, has been accepted as the philosopher of American education.

In Dewey’s teaching man is no more than a biological organism; he has no separate soul or mind; his natural instincts and impulses grow and develop under controlled and directed experience. Traditional religious and cultural values, according to Dewey, cannot therefore be the basic material for the school curriculum. There are no absolutes in the Dewey philosophy Man must grow and develop individually and socially solely by meeting, or adapting himself to, his present problems and environment.

Dewey was deeply impregnated with Darwinism, the same type of Darwinism as Communism propagates. His teaching is monist; it has no place for God or for a separate soul; — it is sheer, rampant Secularism or Atheism.

## ***God is Banned***

Communism is an evil that menaces us from without; Secularism is a deadly cancer eating at the very vitals of our national life. The corrosive influence of Secularism has already made tremendous inroads into every phase of our national existence. Business and government, labor and education, religion, the arts, the sciences, all have felt its base impact. No department of our national life is immune. Consciously or unconsciously, Secularism is being preached and taught in

our secular universities and who will dare deny that this evil influence is not felt even in the supposedly guarded environs of our Catholic institutions of higher learning. Most terrible of all, Secularism is apotheosized in the lives of our people. Every organ of communication — the stage, television, radio, moving pictures, the press — all carry their message of raw materialism. No spiritual values; no fixed canons of morality; what the majority want and do determines the acceptable norms of conduct. Dare to question these norms and you are at once branded as old-fashioned and reactionary — a square. The incantation of Secularism is everywhere being dinned into our ears — eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die.

Basically, philosophically, Communism and Secularism are one; both are predicated on the same premise — the materialistic concept of life. They are one in their materialism, one on their pragmatism, one in their atheism. It is high time that our American people, especially our Catholic people, awoke to this fact and realized its malevolent implications.

If man is all animal, if there is nothing in his make-up but matter, if man's soul is not immortal, if man's only motivation is economic and pleasure seeking — no eternal destiny, no absolutes, no God — then Kosygin and Brezhnev and Mao Tse Tung are right and differ from our American secularists only in being more logical in following a false philosophy to its ultimate, hideous conclusion: the complete degradation of the human person.

In other words we are nourishing in our breast at home the very viper whose head, with so much fanfare and sinister hypocrisy, we set out to crush in the far corners of the globe.

## *Is The West Still Christian?*

Communism and Secularism are philosophical bedfellows. The unholy union between them is cemented by their mutual and relentless antagonism to religion. Herein lies the reason, why, as a nation, the United States is so soft on Communism.

Politically we are a member nation of the so-called Christian West as opposed to the Communist bloc. Ideologically speaking an impassable gulf lies between these two worlds. One might reasonably expect to find at least a stalemate existing between these two camps. But such is not the case.

Communism steadily and ruthlessly advances while the Free World just as steadily and cravenly gives way. Communists are unrelenting and unrelaxed in their militant materialism; always and everywhere, they openly profess and consistently practice their dialectic materialism; they are resolute in their policy of expansion whether by intrigue or force; dogged in their determination to conquer the world including the United States. On the other hand the supposedly Christian West, because of the pervading and corroding secularist miasma, compromises on its basic political and religious principles and makes dismal appeasement an established policy.

Obsession with Secularism vitiates hallowed traditions and corrodes national patriotism.

Despite the brutal, murderous, perfidious history of the Soviets and Red China, we persist in doing business with them, we sit at table with them and drink to their healths; and when their high officials with crime-soiled records are pleased to visit our shores, we spread out the plush carpet for them. Notwithstanding the fact that of the more than fifty agreements made during recent

years between the U.S.S.R and the U.S.A fifty-one have already been broken, yet we still persist in making new agreements with Moscow. What have we to learn from them? We are now negotiating new cultural exchange agreements with the U.S.S.R. When the Catholic country of Hungary rose to a man to throw off the Communist yoke, we stood silently by whilst every spiritual value our forefathers fought for, and built our nation on, were mocked and trampled into the dirt.

## *Dialectic Materialism in Education*

Why this exasperating, shameful inconsistency? To me the answer is very plain. In a Communist prison the brutal principles of dialectic materialism were monotonously drilled into my ears, namely, that there is no God, no soul, no after life, no virtue, that there is but one meritorious attitude of mind—complete submission to the ruling Peoples' Government.

Within the borders of the United States, in classrooms and on platforms, the *same* perfidious principles are being continuously expounded before our American youth, that there is no God, no soul, no after life, no absolutes, no stable morality, that what the majority decrees and does, howsoever outrageous to our Christian morality or contradictory to the teachings of Christ, is the accepted standard of modern morals and good manners.

If this seems too severe a stricture on our American school system — listen to Pope Pius XII. This saintly churchman and great scholar, in an address on the Progress and Problems of the Church in the United States declared:

*"We raise Our voice in strong, albeit paternal complaint, that in so many schools of your land Christ is often despised of ignored; the explanation of the*

*universe and mankind is forced within the narrow limits of materialism or of rationalism, and new educational systems are sought after which cannot but produce a sorrowful harvest in the intellectual and moral life of the nation."*

Personally, I have come to see more and more clearly what the Chinese Communists meant when they boasted so often that they had many friends and sympathizers in the United States in consequence of which would all go well with them.

## *Ideological Bedfellows*

Secularism and Communism, to repeat once more, are natural bedfellows. Communism looks upon the Catholic Church as its implacable enemy and seeks to destroy her. Secularism, from its inception, has been anti-religious and anti-Roman. This will explain why, if a choice had to be made between Communism and the Catholic Church, many of our civil leaders, the majority of professors in our state and secular universities, together with a substantial number of non-Catholic clergymen, would choose Communism. Such is the considered judgment of observers of wide experience on the present day political scene.

Secularism dominates our great national centers of learning — the state supported universities and technical schools — and from these ivory towers its lethal fall-out filters into every crack and cranny of the nation's life. And here I am reminded of that dreaded physical phenomenon that we who lived in Central and Southern China from time to time experience — the transparent yellow dust — loess — periodically blowing across South China from the Gobi desert, 1000 miles to the north, overcasting the sun with an amber mist, depositing over everything within doors and

without a film of fine topaz sand, chilling man and beast to the marrow of the bone. So too with the deadly fall-out that emanates from our university campuses and that floats unendingly across the land. Supportable that this might be if only the marrow of the bone felt the enervating chill but unhappily this mortal virus penetrates even to the mind and kills the soul.

## **Pope Paul's Mandate**

Pope Paul VI has called for a crusade against modern, practical atheism. This all-out campaign he wills to be the dominant activity of his pontificate.

At an audience granted to the 224 Jesuit delegates assembled in Rome for the General Chapter of their Society in the spring of 1965, His Holiness made a momentous pronouncement:

*"Atheism is a fearful danger threatening all mankind; atheism manifests itself variously under changing aspects, among which militant impiety is undoubtedly to be regarded as the most terrible. For it does not limit itself to denying the existence of God in thought and mode of life, but it takes up arms against theism to uproot every religious sentiment and value."*

*"Practical atheism," the Pope went on to say, "is professed by those who place every value in pleasure, who reject all religious worship because they regard it as superstitious, useless and tiresome to worship and to serve the Creator and to obey His laws. They live without faith in Christ, without hope, and without God."*

Such is the identical, naked atheism that I heard so brutally and blasphemously proclaimed when in a Communist prison;

the cruel denial of God that was forced down the throats of the natives of my diocese by a Communist propaganda corps as the supposedly scientific off-shoot of the Darwinian theory.

*"This is the atheism," Pope Paul concludes, "which prevails in our times — sometimes openly, sometimes hidden and disguised, most often under the guise of progress in culture, economics, and the social field."*

Pope Paul, both in his writings and in his addresses, makes it very clear that when warning against atheism he is not referring to atheism as a mere abstraction, as some philosophical transcendental principles, but as a concrete phenomenon ever spreading in the world in which we live. Atheism permeates modern society in a thousand subtle and devious ways. It makes no difference whether the harsher word, atheism, or the euphemistic term, secularism, be used. And since atheism, according to the mind of the Holy Father, bears so many disguises we must learn to unmask it in its various shapes and forms.

In these United States some of the various shapes and forms unmistakably are:

- (1) Atheism is the Supreme Court barring God from our national education system.
- (2) Atheism expresses itself in obscene literature, plays, many TV shows, and much advertising.
- (3) Atheism powers the drive in our universities and technical institutions for the total elimination of all absolutes.
- (4) Atheistic fall-out influences the thinking and attitudes of Catholic teachers, and students, clergy, both secular and religious, and religious Sisters, attending notoriously Godless institutions of higher learning.

(5) Atheism is effectively furthered by the deliberate caricature of the Catholic Church by slick Catholic and non-Catholic writers who exaggerate and hold up for snickers and ridicule the picayune foibles of priests, Sisters and laity. The damage in this field can be immense.

(6) Atheism—or dynamic materialism—is the solid foundation for the unbelievable development of the Birth Control campaign — the only parallel to the startling Birth Control success is the growth throughout the world of atheistic Communism itself.

All these things add up to the “militant impiety” which Pope Paul deplores and solemnly warns against.

## *Which Way Americans?*

It is not for me to suggest what action is to be taken to meet and to overcome the ever pressing menace of atheism in the modern world. Pope Paul at the proper time will have directives for the Society of Jesus, for all other religious congregations and for the People of God on how this momentous campaign is to be fought.

But here I cannot help but recall a reflection of my deeply lamented friend, Whittaker Chambers, to be found in his posthumous book, *Cold Friday*, when he was pondering over the amazing progress made (in less than fifty years) from total chaos to world dominance by Russian Communism and the parallel developing palsy of the once all powerful and so-called Christian West during the same brief period of time. With feeling clearly under strong control he writes, “I was forty years old and the father of children before I knew the meaning of the Crucifixion . . . the mind which has rejected the soul and marched alone,

has brought the age to the brink of disaster. Let us say it flatly: what the age needs is less minds than martyrs — less knowledge (knowledge was never so cheap) — but that wisdom which begins with the necessity to die.”

May all concerned Americans march in this spirit behind Pope Paul VI in the tremendous epochal crusade he is launching in our day against dynamic materialistic atheism.

## ***EPILOGUE***

This little booklet by the late Bishop of Yuanling, China, former Chairman of the Council of the Cardinal Mindszenty Foundation, first appeared in 1967, and has drawn enthusiastic response. Many readers have told us that it opened their eyes to the part played by secularism in creating the problems that confront our Church and our country.

Now, it is even clearer that the Bishop's words were prophetic. The advance of secularism is more apparent and more threatening. We witness a sharp decline in moral standards; attacks, both open and subtle, against religion; increasing loss of faith; a sickening campaign against human life—all attributable to the spread of militant atheism.

We urge you to buy and distribute many copies of this booklet; to give it to friends, relatives, and neighbors; to clergymen, religious, and teachers. See that copies are sent to church and school libraries, and made available in your pamphlet rack. The effort you make will help to defend the faith and to preserve our freedom.

*You can help to inform others by giving*

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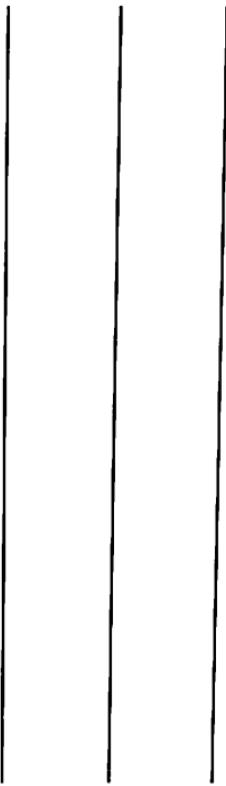
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